

### On the supposed evil influence exercised by ghosts in the Malay Peninsula.

Some four years ago when I was engaged in certain prospecting operations in the highlands of Pahang on the borders of that State with Perak, I had occasion to make a somewhat lengthy stay at a place called Kampar on the Tué river, one of the tributaries of the Betok, in its turn a tributary of the Jelai, the principal feeder of the Pahang River. I selected this spot because it had already been cleared of large trees and had only recently been in occupation as a Sakai Settlement, from the remains of which, we reared our unpretentious little camp. The Sakais however strongly advised us to go elsewhere alleging that this place was haunted by elephant ghosts and that they had been the direct cause of a number of deaths among them, principally among their children, whose remains lie buried there. It is necessary to explain that at the back of this place, not fifty yards away, is to be seen one of those peculiar muddy pools which animals of all kinds frequent for their saline properties, this particular one being known as the Kubang Gajah Hantu (the mud pool of the ghostly elephants). These salt licks are also known as *genuts* in Malay. When the Sakais refer to this place it is usually with bated breath and a mysterious and awesome gesture. These men declared that almost nightly elephants are seen and heard breaking twigs and branches and wallowing in this mud pool, and yet in the morning, not a vestige of their spoor can be seen anywhere. Of this I am certain, the prints of deer and pigs were always plentiful and fresh, but no elephant could have been within miles of the place during my residence in that locality. My mandor's wife, an oldish person, who always followed her husband in his journeys doing the cooking for my followers, declared that the first night we slept there, she and all my men heard continued long drawn wails, like a long we-ê-ê-ê which went on without intermission until almost daylight. This noise they said came from those Sakai children buried there.

This account is interesting from an ethnological standpoint in so far as it illustrates the beliefs and superstitions of a race of very primitive people. As for the number of children dying

at the time, this would only seem natural when it is remembered that an epidemic of measles was then and had been for some time after raging.

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### Malay Witchcraft.

Towards the end of 1901 while I was in charge of a country district in Alor Gajah, complaints were made to me of a certain Pawang Musah who was said to bewitch children by means of a familiar spirit called a Polong. One man stated that one of his children had died from the effects and that another was affected. As his house was only about a mile from where I lived, I and the colonial surgeon from Malacca, who happened to be with me on one of his periodical visits decided to go and see the child. When we arrived at the house we found a large number of people in the house and lying at one end of the verandah, the child (a little girl of 7 or 8 years old) in a semi-unconscious state. The doctor examined it and found that it was in a high fever and evidently dying. While we were there the father sat down and spoke to the child. She opened her eyes and when asked by the father "who sent you here and who is your father" or words to that effect, she replied "Pawang Musah." This was taken by the bystanders to be the voice of the Polong speaking through the child. We were also told that the child had been asked who would be the next victim and had pointed out her older sister a girl of 18 or 19 years old. This girl was examined by the doctor and found to have nothing the matter with her. We assured her she had nothing to fear, and as far as I know she is still alive, at any rate she was alive in February 1902 when I left Malacca. The dying child was suffering from malarial fever, enlarged spleen and starvation and though we sent up stimulants they were of no avail and she died a very few hours after we left. Pawang Musah lived about 2 miles from where the child lived and had a bad reputation as a wizard. He originally came from the other side of Malacca about 30 miles away and had moved about from village to village everywhere getting the credit for the deaths of child-